

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV PINT GR

SUBJECT: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE RECENT CHANGES IN
THE GREEK CABINET

REF: ATHENS 076, ATHENS 077

1. THE TWO CABINET CHANGES ANNOUNCED JAN 5 (REFTELS)
DO NOT MAKE VERY MUCH REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE OVERALL
ORIENTATION OF THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME,
HOWEVER, THEY BRING NEW BLOOD TO THESE IMPORTANT MINISTERIAL
POSTS TO REPLACE TWO MINISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN TRYING TO RESIGN
FOR SOME TIME. THE CHANGES COMBINED TWO FEATURES FOR WHICH
THE PRIME MINISTER IS KNOWN--SURPRISE AND SECRECY. SURPRISE
IN THAT THE CHANGES ARE VERY LIMITED AND NOT THE BROAD CABINET
RESHUFFLE THAT WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED. SECRECY IN
THAT THE PRIME MINISTER APPARENTLY DID NOT EVEN CONSULT ONE
OF THE NEW APPOINTEES UNTIL THE DAY OF HIS APPOINTMENT.

2. CABINET CHANGES HAVE BEEN EXPECTED FOR QUITE SOME
TIME. RUMORS OF A RESHUFFLE HAVE SURFACED REPEATEDLY
OVER THE PAST 6-8 MONTHS AND ON ALMOST EVERY OCCASION
THE NAMES OF MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER GHIKAS AND
EDUCATION MINISTER ZEPPAS FIGURED AS THE MOST LIKELY
FIGURES TO STEP DOWN. ALTHOUGH THE GOVT HAD BEEN QUICK
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TO SCOTCH EARLIER RUMORS OF AN IMPENDING RESHUFFLE,

THE GOG DID NOT COMMENT ON THE MOST RECENT RUMOR LAST WEEK. AS A RESULT, THERE WAS A GROWING EXPECTATION THAT A RELATIVELY WIDE RESHUFFLE WOULD OCCUR.

3. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE ZEPPUS AND GHIKAS DEPARTURES WERE PREDICTED FOR SOME TIME (FOR SEVERAL MONTHS BOTH HAVE INDICATED THEIR STRONG DESIRES TO RESIGN FOR PERSONAL AND HEALTH REASONS) AND MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED SOONER EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER REPORTEDLY WAS UNWILLING TO APPEAR TO BE GIVING IN TO OPPOSITION PRESSURE--- ESPECIALLY IN THE CASE OF GHIKAS. GHIKAS HAD BEEN CRITICIZED WIDELY DURING THE PAST YEAR BY MANY FIGURES IN THE OPPOSITION FOR ALLEGED PRO-JUNTA LEANINGS AND FOR FAILURE TO MOVE MORE EFFECTIVELY IN CLEANSING THE SECURITY SERVICES OF JUNTA ELEMENTS. ZEPPUS, A RESPECTED INTELLECTUAL AND ACADEMICIAN, SIMILARLY HAD BEEN CRITICIZED FOR HIS ALLEGED INABILITY (OR UNWILLINGNESS) TO BRING ABOUT A MORE THOROUGH PURGE OF THE FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, AND ALSO FOR GENERAL INEFFECTIVENESS. HOWEVER, AT SAME TIME, IT WAS ALSO BELIEVED BY MANY POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT CABINET CHANGES WERE REQUIRED IN A NUMBER OF OTHER MINISTRIES AND ESPECIALLY IN THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL AREAS. THE POSSIBILITY THAT WIDER CHANGES IN THE CABINET MAY STILL OCCUR CANNOT BE COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED BUT AS OF NOW IT DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY THEY WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND POSSIBLY NOT BEFORE THE SUMMER, AS THE GOVT ITSELF INDICATED IN ITS JAN 5 STATEMENT (REF B).

4. RALLIS BRINGS TO THE EDUCATION MINISTRY GREAT PRESTIGE STEMMING FROM HIS PREVIOUS MINISTERIAL SERVICE OVER MANY YEARS, AND LONG AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY SEVERAL SOURCES THAT NEVERTHELESS IT WAS CLEAR RALLIS DID NOT WANT THE EDUCATION JOB. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, HE HAD FLATLY REJECTED THAT POSITION AS RECENTLY AS TWO WEEKS AGO. HIS DICINCLINATION TO ACCEPT IT WAS PRESUMABLY BASED ON THE "IMPOSSIBLE" NATURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION AND HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO TARNISH HIS POLITICAL IMAGE BY A FAILURE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ANTIQUATED
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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GREECE. (ONE NEW DEMOCRACY DEPUTY WITH GOOD ACCESS TO PARTY LEADERS TOLD US ON JAN 7 THAT RALLIS WAS "FURIOUS AND VERY UPSET" WITH HIS APPOINTMENT.)

5. THE APPOINTMENT OF STAMATIS TO HEAD THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER HAS NOT RAISED SIMILAR QUESTIONS. STAMATIS, A STRONG CONSERVATIVE, IS POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS AND ACCORDING TO ALL ACCOUNTS HAS THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO PERFORM CAPABLY

IN A POSITION WHICH REQUIRES TOUGHNESS. HE HAS PERFORMED WITH
CONSIDERABLE EFFECTIVENESS AS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE
PARLIAMENT--IN A TOUGH-MINDED BUT FAIR MANNER. HIS NICKNAME
"THE SHERIFF" WAS EARNED AS A RESULT OF THAT SERVICE, ESPECIALLY
DURING THE COMPLICATED AND OFTEN HEATED DISCUSSIONS OVER THE
CONSTITUTION LAST SPRING WHEN HE PRESIDED OVER MANY OF THE
SESSIONS WITH A FIRM HAND. HOWEVER, STAMATIS HIMSELF
TOLD A FELLOW ND DEPUTY ON JAN 5 THAT HE WAS NOT ADVISED
IN ADVANCE OF THE COMING APPOINTMENT BUT ONLY LEARNED OF IT THAT
SAME DAY. THE SAME ND DEPUTY INDICATED THAT THE PRESIDENT OF
THE PARLIAMENT--CONSTANTINE PAPACONSTANTINOU--HAD NOT BEEN
TOLD PREVIOUSLY OF THE STAMATIS APPOINTMENT EVEN THOUGH--
AS HIS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT--PAPACONSTANTINOU DEPENDS HEAVILY
ON STAMATIS ASSISTANCE IN DAY TO DAY PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES.
KUBISCH

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